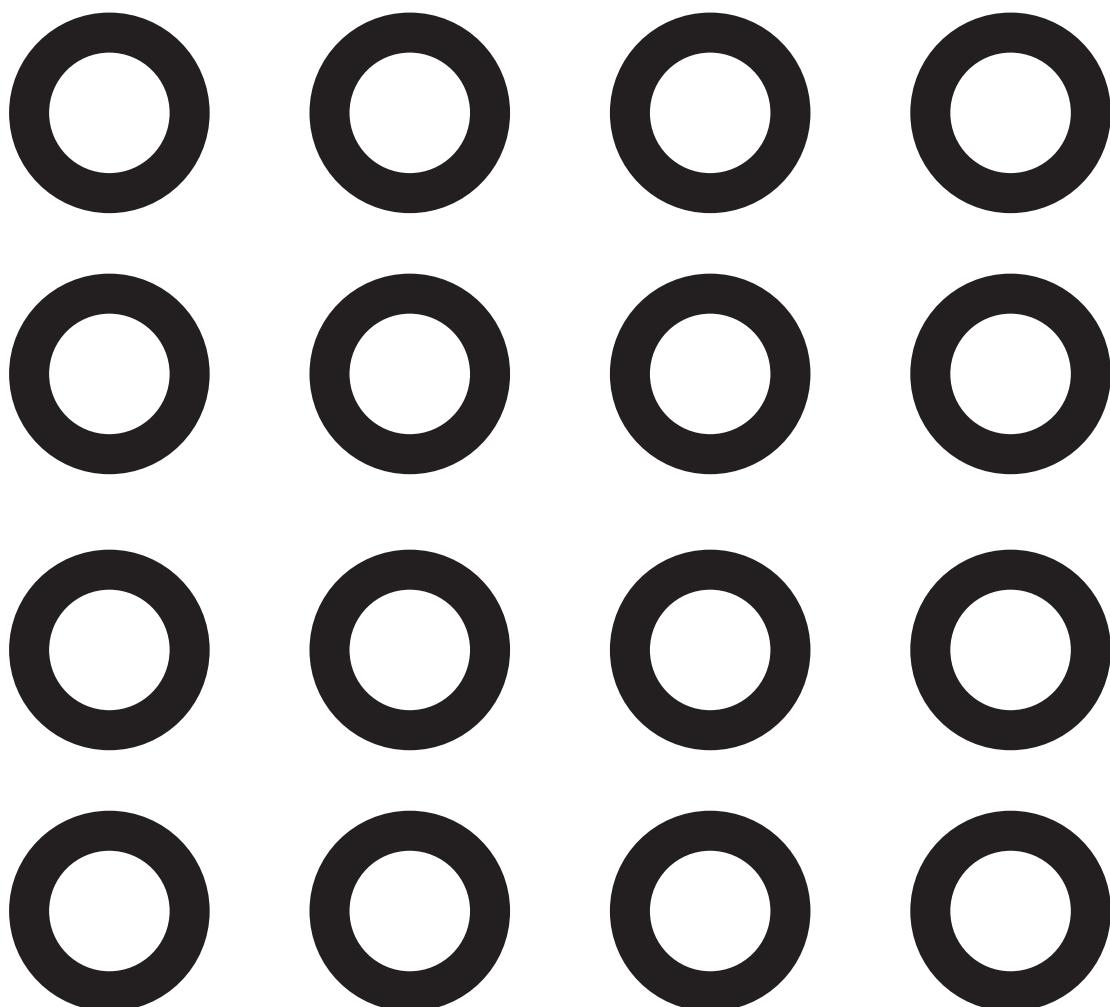


Balcan Can Contemporary 8 *Interviews*



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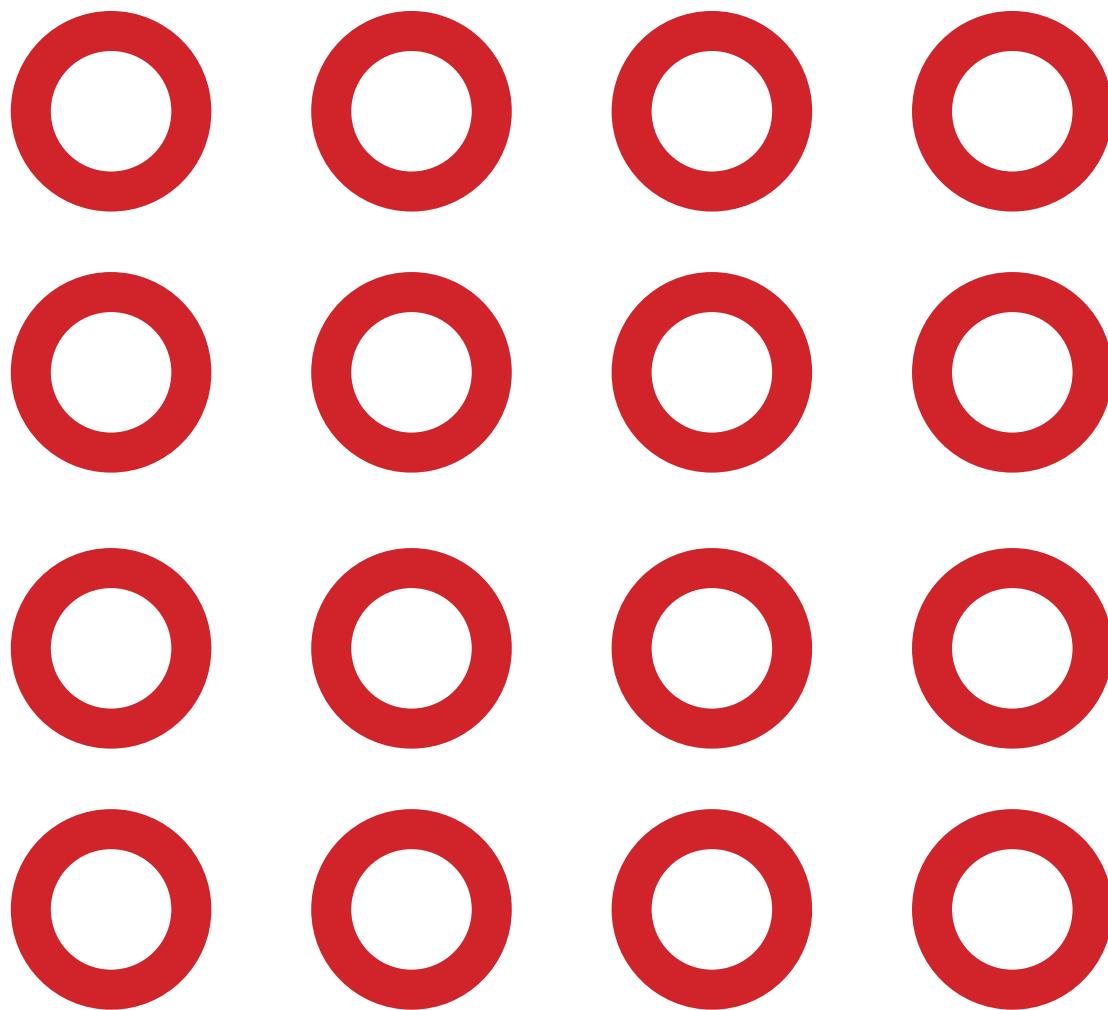
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**BALCAN
CAN
CONTEM-
PORARY**

ISSUE 8

The project Balcan Can Contemporary has been following the performing arts in the Balkans and with this magazine we highlighted some specific contexts, presenting formats and artistic forms which have been defining contemporary arts in the region. The idea behind the magazine is to put some focus on performing arts in the Balkans within the international landscape, and to support and provide visibility to a cross-generational roster of artists. The following issue of the magazine is focusing on some of the artists and producers from around the Balkans who are changing our current position of performing arts. We are, therefore, in conversation with like Bojan Jablanovec, Jelena Bogavac, Željko Zorica, Bojana Radulović, Hazim Begagić. To end this issue, Una Bauer is giving us an overview of other magazines dealing with performing arts - Maska, Frakcija and TkH. This has been a personal favorite issue so far, and while the Balcan Can Contemporary project comes to an end, and we may move to an online platform, the dedication to keep discovering, learning and letting others know about the numerous artistic practices of this region remains strong in each and every partner of this project.

Zvonimir Dobrović



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INTERVIEW WITH BOJAN JABLANOVEC

BY DINA JOKANOVIĆ

NEOLIBERAL CRISIS REDUCES ART TO A BUSINESS ACTIVITY



Bojan Jablanovec is a theatre director, founder and artistic director of the Via Negativa project.

First of all, where did you grow up and when was the first time you knew that your life path was in performative arts?

I grew up in the small provincial city of Murska Sobota in the South East of Slovenia, which was at that time about 4 hours drive from Ljubljana. The city lies in the middle of extensive fields of corn, wheat, sugarbeet, vegetable gardens and orchards. My parents came to live in the city from neighbouring villages, and were proud that they were not peasants anymore. It was the story of the majority of citizens. Murska Sobota was a socialist project of urbanizing of the rural part of Slovenia which caused a lot of tensions, disappointments and frustrations in the local population.

This atmosphere was very fruitful for all kinds of "artistic rebellion", which in my case was first expressed in a passionate need to be a part of the rock'n'roll subculture. And this provoked deep conflicts with my parents, which we never resolved.

What influences from your youth would you say had the biggest impact on your life as an artist?

It was quite early in my high school theatre activities, which I took a part in as an actor, that I read three books: *A Short Organum for the Theatre* by Berthold Brecht, *The Empty Space* by Peter Brook, and *Towards a Poor Theatre* by Jerzy Grotowski. I was thrilled about the ideas in these books even before I saw any professional theatre productions. Shortly after that, I started to go to theatre performances in Ljubljana, and very soon I was quite disappointed with them. I could not understand why none of what I



Out by Via Negativa
(photo by Darko Vaupotić)

had read in the books was visible in the performances that I saw. I was not sure if I had not understood what I'd read, or if I simply couldn't recognize these great ideas on a real stage.

What was the main trigger for founding Via Negativa?

At this point my story becomes a little bit twisted and not as straightforward as I would like it to be. It

was a slow process that lasted for 10 years and not at all some kind of epiphany or sudden decision. In 1989, immediately after finishing at the Academy for Theatre Studies in Ljubljana, I started to work in Slovenian institutional repertoire theatres, and this lasted until 1999. During all of this time I was struggling with the production system in these theatres, but I hoped that I would work out how to approach it in a way that would make it work for me. So I accepted various offers to direct drama pieces and, (as a 'talented young director,' as I was labeled in those days) I fought with the dramatic texts, the actors, the rehearsals etc. I was never satisfied with myself or the outcomes of these fights, until finally I had to accept that my expectations of theatre demand a completely different approach in the sense of production and working methods. With Via Negativa I first of all I started to build a production framework and working methods that would work, not only for me but also for the people I work with.

The performances you stage and direct are usually based on somewhat reduced aesthetics, and your focus seems to be based on (mis)communication between artists and viewers. Do you think that performance art can communicate with the audience differently than theatre?

Not at all. They function on the same principle and the difference between theatre and performing arts is quite artificial in my opinion. (Mis)communication is written in the core of both practices. I believe that the crucial difference lies in the working process itself, or, more precisely, the difference is that performing arts is dealing with issues of the working process, which become a visible part of their production, while on the other side, theatre mystifies its working process. In this sense for me our state



Game With Toothpicks by Via Negativa
(photo by Darko Vaupotić)

theatre academies are institutes of mystification and not tools of artistic enlightenment.

What are your expectations from the viewers? Have you ever had a negative experience with an audience? And I assume that some viewers have had negative experiences with you?

I do not have any expectations of the audience, but from the other side, the audience should have and do have expectations of the artist. I never think about this as something right or wrong, I'm just simply aware of this fact. It is a fact that each artist must accept and work with. Problems arise if the artist submits to those expectations, or if he wants to fulfil them. I think it is necessary to play with them. Our task is to outplay them intelligently, and we have to use expectations in order to offer something else, something we believe in and fight for. About the unexpected there's always uncertainty, which could work for or against you. In this sense certain viewers probably have had some negative experiences with us, but this is a process written in the dynamics of the continuity of artistic development.

What are the criteria that guide your selection of performers in your productions? What are the artistic and philosophical rationales or processes that you use when building your projects?

It's quite a simple philosophy. In Via Negativa the performer has to stand on the stage with his own reason, body and story. I make sure there is a consistent working process, a frame of work and a focus. During all stages of our work I follow the performer's interest, needs, and energy. If there's no personal need or readiness in a performer's habitus to expose himself on the stage beyond any boundaries – then there's no ground on which we could co-operate. I always give performers a lot of opportunities, support and time during the process to find the way to approach the subject we are dealing with, and to overcome creative blocks. This is successful only if we constantly and openly exchange material and ideas. We always start from a zero point, and we have a deal that the delivery of the content (meaning

story, situation, gestures, etc) is the obligation of the performer. I can start to build the structure and context only when I feel that we have reached some promising material.

The human body is the main tool in your productions. How far is it possible to push the limits of the human body in the pursuit of art?

It would be more precise to say that our basic tool is the presence, which is captured in the body. It's true that in our performances many times we touch the ends of the body's limitations, but it is not our goal to test them or push them further and further with each performance. It would be creative suicide. But everything that performer possesses in the sense of creative tools is trapped inside the body: energy, imagination, voice, everything is limited by the body and limitations were always a big creative challenge for humans. In my opinion it is only because of our limitations that art or creativity in general make sense – always with the same mission: to overcome them.

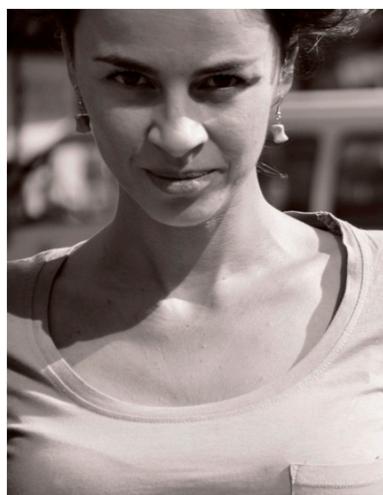
How does the role of art change in this time of crisis?

In the times we're facing today the importance of art and the artist's responsibility is growing. The current situation offers artists a very explosive and productive context on one side and on the other we are faced with brutal financial cuts and neoliberal logic, which is reducing art to the level of a business activity that has to compete for profit on the free market. Daily politics deals with us as parasites on the state budget and in this atmosphere general public opinion is not on our side. In my opinion the most important task of an artist in this situation is to fight against this logic with strong works, clear and sharp statements that viewers can identify with, and in this way to gain more audience on our side. "To make people free is the aim of art; therefore art for me is the science of freedom." This is one of many of Joseph Beuys's statements about the meaning of art. At least from Duchamp onwards art is what the artist succeeds to define as art. And this is what the art is preoccupied with for the whole century: to create new definitions of art. Maybe today's mission of art should be to make people free from art. And we should not be naïve, art cannot change the world, but can support and accelerate its need for change. More risk taking performances, more visibility, louder works, regardless of the shortage of money. This is the only strategy for today and tomorrow.

INTERVIEW WITH JELENA BOGAVAC

BY VANJA NIKOLIĆ

IN THE BIGGEST JUNKYARDS GROWS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS



Jelena Bogavac is a director, poet, and dramaturg of BITEF theatre, and a member of the Drama Mental Studio. She is the author of many plays, performances and poetry events in the theatres in Serbia, but also on the independent art scene. She is not an optimist, but also not a pessimist about the situation of the independent art scene. She just tries to work as much as possible, hoping for change.

How do you see the situation in the independent art scene in Serbia? And compared with the rest of the region?

The crisis on the independent scene is basically dramatic (both here and anywhere else) and the reason is the rise of the creative industries. In Serbia, the permanent misunderstanding between official policy and artists comes from the provincial way of thinking. A parochial philosophy of art is about the need for so-called national "patriotic art," which is focused on the dictatorship of the national artistic creations. All the outflow seen from this narrow point of view flows over the borders.

In that way it does not bother or endanger the national right wing. Serbia does not care for her talent in any category. It is seen as one sixth of one percent, which is how much of the whole national budget goes to culture in general. A consequential problem of this society and its social climate and social context is that it is apparently open to all possibilities, beyond which are actually concealed indifference or exploitative policies. Censorship of our cultural circle lies in ignorance, autism and self-sufficiency in relation to any artistic content coming from the independent scene.



Jelena with her friend
(photo contributed by artist)

Might the outflow of artists gain some benefits like cooperations, coproductions etc.?

We have certainly heard a lot about that topic in the debate within the project "Outflow of the independent scene," organized by the Association Per.Art. The founder of the association is one of the leading performers on our independent scene, Saša Asentić. One of the main problems detected in that debate for the artist was not understanding how to deal with technocrats, because they do not speak the same language, and do not operate with the same financial numbers. That is why it is time for artists to seek the professional help of economists and lawyers to negotiate on their behalf, as they do not know the dictionary, or the modes of dialogue and cooperation with public institutions in Serbia.

Bitef is an institution that is doing coproductions with the independent art scene. How does it work?

Bitef is the only city theater that is by definition theatre that develops new theatre trends. It is also the only one that functions without its own theatre ensemble, therefore, it is open to the possibility of collaboration with artists from the independent scene. In the new economic situation in the cultural sector, which is a mirror of the general social decline, when the city budget finances not more than four productions annually, Bitef strives to stay and survive as an umbrella organization for independent theatrical activities, independent artists and troops. In cooperation with foreign cultural centres and foundations, in the form of co-production arrangements with clear repertoire policy, this season Bitef theatre had eight co-productions / productions, and hosted a number of independent artists and troops from the country and abroad. Bitef theatre is a meeting place for young, free-thinking intellectuals whose field of vision includes critical judgment, and political content, and activities in arts and culture which are closer to international and away from the "desirable local bourgeois." Belgrade, as a metropolis, cannot be that without international connection. The civic duty of Bitef is to remain what it is, and not fall under the influence of "pink patriotism" that consists of the ignorance of the political, and the critical attitude of artists towards the difficult daily situation.

What benefits does Bitef gain from these collaborations? What are the benefits to the artists?

There is a need for at least ten theatre institutions like Bitef in Serbia. Then, we would be able to open a serious dialogue that could take into account a cultural exchange program. It would also start a process of dialogue and cooperation with public institutions in the republic, and with cities, in order to increase the general cultural development. In that way it would be possible to strengthen the weak independent scene platform through joint action for the application of international donors. Also, different options would increase the positive influence on decision-making in the field of cultural policies at the national and local levels, which would eventually open up the possibility of a real decentralization of cultural activities in Serbia.

As a member of a Drama Mental Studio you are part of an independent scene. Do you manage to work on that also?

I have been working in Bitef theatre and for Bitef festival for ten years. At the same time, with my sister Milena Bogavac, a dramaturgist and playwright, I have the independent troop, Drama Mental Studio. Since 1999 we have created over one hundred different art activities. Lately, we have been working on developing a poetic performance, and other para-theatrical genres connected with it. They include the great possibilities for artists to make politically engaged theatre and have a critical impact on the lazy society. Of course, too often we work in low budget or no budget conditions. It is killing us, but it is also moving. There is the phrase, already so exploited: In the biggest junkyards grow the most beautiful flowers. Okay. But it would be quite okay for the flower to get some "water" from time to time at least.

INTERVIEW WITH ZELJKO ZORICA

BY ANDRÉ VON AH

CONTEMPORARY ART ALLOWS EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE



«Art includes not just works of formal beauty to be enjoyed by people with 'taste', or works with beauty and uplifting moral messages, but also works that are ugly and disturbing, with a shatteringly negative moral content.»
—Cynthia Freeland, *But is it Art?*, 2001

Željko Zorica is an intriguing Croatian conceptual artist whose visually stunning food installations have been presented throughout the Balkans, Europe and in New York. He continually researches, expands and challenges the multi-disciplinary formats in which he works; a very contemporary blend of conceptual, installation and performance art.

He usually works in an audio—video—edible installation format that is organized and presented alongside a controlled happening, such as the piece "KroATisch—Amerikanische Freundschaft".

Playing with the concepts of signification and symbolization, in its semiotic contexts, Zorica lays down a table with a varied assortment of custom designed foods to signify or symbolize different aspects of his socially aware reflections.

The depiction of food in art certainly has a place in Art history, and the examples are many, from the pictograms in the walls of caves by pre-historical men to literal paintings of the Last Supper or of banquets offered by European monarchs. A frequent theme in Zorica's installations is the association between pigs and politicians, through visual approximation. Such an association is ambiguous in its very nature. Are the politicians pigs, to be consumed by the masses during or after they have completed their intended purpose, or are they like pigs, in its dirty nature? By presenting the audiences with food with which it can be eaten during the installation, the artist reminds us of our very human nature. That consumption is at its most basic core, and it offers a clue to interpretations of his work. Novalis, an author and philosopher from the early German Romanticism also points to cannibalism: "All enjoyment, all taking in and assimilation, is eating, or rather: eating is nothing other than assimilation. All spiritual pleasure can be expressed through eating." Derrida and his work "As a Weasel Sucks Eggs: An Essay on Melancholy and Cannibalism" (published in English in 2008 by Sternberg Press), goes further into this interpretation and takes the consumption of food as an act of futile resistance, in an allusion to Hegel and the concept of "Erinnerung," which means both memory and interiorization. "Everything shall be incorporated into the great digestive system—nothing is inedible in Hegel's infinite metabolism. The figures of incorporation in hermeneutics and speculative philosophy are what I call the "tropes of

cannibalism.", said Derrida in an interview to the periodical E-Flux.

In addition to that, Zorica's installations go back and forth between imitation and conceptual abstraction. Such as in the piece "The Plaque Memorial" (2011), in which he had both actors dressed as Dutch soldiers alluding to Srebrenica; and a concept virtual memorial plaque—a TV screen which changed its message according to the happenings of the piece.

Inviting itself into the audience's mental habitus, the artist usually proceeds to a series of speeches that emanate the gesture of contemporary performance in its relationship and antagonism to the audience. While the ancient dimension of protocol and ritual that involves the giving of speeches since times long past is there, his works re-connect themselves to the present moment by digitalizing their presence and format to videos, projected and / or shown live on television screens.

The table and the speeches involve elements and people from both the local community and from the artist's native culture. By working with(in) the local cultures into which he is invited, he refuses the horizontal multiculturalist's colonial approach to art making—using one or two foreign elements to convince itself and the audience of its engagement with the world—while also defying the very possibility of a vertical approach—in which meanings are built from within and at intersections. By doing so, the artist then challenges our very conceptions of world and good and puts in question the ways in which we have chosen to live together, or apart.



Kroatische-Französische Freundschaft, food served to the guests in 2012 at the DañsFabrik festival, in Brest, France (photo Viktor Krasnić)

How did you come to the idea of using food in your installations?

Ideas need to be spurred to encourage them to promote the blossoming of the experiential and perceptive world of the individual. For me, it's easiest to use as motivation the invitations to festivals, birthdays, and anniversaries of famous artists or, even when some organiser has problems and maybe wants to invest whatever extra money they have in my work. That's how it happened that I was invited to Poreč, the well-known tourist town, to the big gathering of peacekeepers, where they planned to also show a bit of art. I did a piece in the restaurant Odisej, which, sadly, no longer exists, with which I played with a collection of words that are usually written under published reproductions of art works in books, newspapers, etc. – oil on canvas. I wanted to prepare a still life: an installation made of a large quantity of food... and that's how my work called "*Still Life: Oil on Canvas*" was created. A litre of olive oil was literally on the canvas, which was a big white tablecloth on which even today are the signatures of the participants of the feast (I never washed it – the creation of this work is still waiting for the tablecloth to be stretched onto a frame, to become a painting). That evening showed how fragile the beliefs from which our mind is constructed can be. Many vegans and vegetarians have succumbed to the challenge of that offer. I remember an activist from Chile who took a knife from his pocket and was opening lamb's skulls like walnuts, sharing them around. He was in his element because, even in early childhood, he mastered that skill at the ranch where he was born. After that I did a full-length performance for the 15th year of Eurokaz – the big theatre festival organised in a small city. That even made me particularly happy, because my task was to organise a formal program with refreshments in the foyer. I made the most of this chance to deconstruct the form of the formal art scene for the 15 years of an established, and also marginal, festival. In the program was a short documentary film that I edited, using the great moments of Eurokaz, but also the large para-theatrical events that were organised by the 'state in progress'. I can still remember the huge military parade at the artificial lake, Jarun, with the late father of our nation, in a white military uniform, saluting the troops. After that brass

music from Kašine was pounding, and a dance group from Samobor. After that, the audience went out to the foyer, where a table had been arranged during the program. Hot lamb and cold pigs heads were arranged like an army on top of the table, while the rest of the table was covered with edible quotations of twentieth century art; avant-garde was the main theme. There was no cutlery, but the audience used rubber gloves like those for rectal exams.

Your work has a very strong political stroke. What is the importance of being political in the arts today? Aren't the ideals dead, as it is often said? Don't we live in a world in which the political lines dividing its ideas seem more and more blurred?

I don't see myself as a political artist, but primarily as an artist who is growing up, as someone who wants to become a man, and thus answer lots of little questions. All my works are at the same time dialogues between my mind and I. From these conversations comes that which the audience sees, and that which the audience consumes mentally and physically. At the end, only the audience itself determines with their behaviour how, and how much, they participate in the work itself.

If the activation of the audience is political, then my mind is satisfied, and then we can say that I am, in that part of myself, politically motivated. To ask yourself every day about ideals dilutes the recognition of that which we are, ourselves. Ideals are just constructed parts of reality which are worth following in some conscious, and in most cases, learned way. Ideals are a continuous imitation and simulation which help our false perception of reality. *Of course, in that reality you can also live and work subconsciously.* It is, therefore a blurred, foggy reality, but it is not the whole time that we live in that reality. We have been given the power to pull out of focus, and look at reality as it is. According to that power, or gift, or simply answer which we seek, and according to such a practice, I direct my actions. My works are, from one point of view, riddles that need to be solved, and after they are asked, and after the event begins, I am also a participant in that riddle. I don't believe, in fact, in works in which everything is clear and which are totally comprehensible to a planetary audience. What is important to me are works of artists and non-artists who create out of the focus, and whose works do not end up in museums.

Going further, how to be political in the arts today? I help myself with my favourite character in the play that we perform in every moment given to us in this world, Mrs Thatcher, the former prime minister of a once great kingdom: ***And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families.*** That was a declaration which is still intertwined with millions of disasters and much social injustice. To understand and explain how there is nothing in the world, but nothing, other than the Society of the whole living system that we call the planet Earth, seems to be the most important political idea that contemporary art needs to deal with. Forms of art have been completely opened up thanks to the legacy of 20th century avant-garde, and they allow Everyone to participate in the field of art.

When an artist works with concepts and demands more than a simple receptive attitude from the audience it is often seem as difficult to understand and, perhaps, hermetic. What do you think of this approach? Have you ever been afraid of not being able to be understood by your audience?

In life it is important to open up and be aware of your own senses, of which we have more than official medicine acknowledges, in order to become conscious beings. The reception of each individual from the audience is limited, not by my piece, but by the layers of personal experience and momentary emotion, which the recipient brought to the field of my work. Hermeticism may be hinted at only in that piece of work which is only mine, and which is speculative, and that part of the work exists exclusively in the past, and is most often written in the catalogues, or in my computer in some of the files. The work in which the audience participates, in the moment of that collision, changes its meaning for me too. Of course, sometimes the confusion of the audience delights me, and sometimes it happens that somebody from the audience emerges with the exact answers to the riddle of the work. The last time that happened was in Zagreb, on the last Perforations festival. It was Kevin Doyle, from the group Sponsored by Nobody. He talked to me about the work *Cabbage Clairvoyant*, as he was actually me.

Is the past relevant for today's (new) art?

The past I see as a phantom, or rather as Fantomas, the fantastic villain from the early 20th century, who was admired in Paris by surrealists and lovers of absinthe. The past is a part of the amorphous state from which we draw that which will be just a momentary part of the moment that is Now. Like

Fantomas, with help from the past, you pass through the walls of the mind, and you commit crimes of recognition. You are shaping the present, which is immediately also the past, and the level of auto-referentiality of today's artists (including myself) is no surprise. In that sense the past is relevant – we can use it as a point around which we spin our personal orbits like a spider, and in that web of new, fresh art we hunt analyses that also feed us, the artists, and the arts scene today. The past suffocates us with its great activity and its absence. It is a paradoxical situation in which one can avoid only by the use of the paranoid critical method of Salvador Dali – spontaneous irrational recognition based on the interpretive-critical association of images created in ecstasy. I translate that into the word love.

There is also still the possibility of clear awareness of the past by declaring: The past is Nothing.

For that declaration, I can thank my own father, who relentlessly used three lovely sentences:

Where have you been?

What have you done?

Nothing!



Installation Kroatische-Amerikanische Freundschaft, Perforations festival
2010
(photo by Darko Vaupotić)

How about the future?

The future is Nothing. I shudder at the futurologist whose escapades I understand as a weapon of slavery in the hands of a corporate mind. In that bush also lies the space which offers Art a future. The great themes that have been already spelled out, and everyone, even me, are caught in the trap. But there is no Us in those great themes, neither you nor me. How about me? How about you?

The greatest of these themes is certainly the survival of the species, with sub-themes of water, food, mutants, immaculate conceptions, changes in religious concepts, the reshaping of the planet Earth... The Rule of the Mind.

The present is all that there is, as says the Buddhist adagio, yet how do you understand the present in your immersive installations in which your speeches introduce context and relevance to the visually stunning works that you present?

After Buddha, it's worth also remembering the words of Groucho Marx, which faithfully describe our common present of direct democracy, in which we are the observers of other's free will, shown through so-called democratic elections. Groucho speaks of the classic politician of our time who sees everything around him clearly and comprehensively as a disaster, but he believes in the possibility of progress, which is a postulate of the corporate mind set to which we are subjected. He may look like an idiot and talk like an idiot but don't let that fool you. He really is an idiot. The words of our leaders and their works and the forms in which all of that occurs, dead forms washed of meaning, is what I deal with in my pieces. I use hymns, oaths, speeches, flags, emblems, traditional dishes and national cuisines, army uniforms... but also performance experiences, and happenings, as well as peaceful reintegration of newspaper texts, quotations and pop songs. Many believe that it is only a moment in human evolution, and that we are gently fluttering towards a Shangri-La society. Arthur C. Clarke, the sci-fi author, whom we admire for the film 2001: A Space Odyssey, believed that the Earth is just a station, which we will abandon after we use it up. I draw most of the ideas on which I base my works from the political constellation in which I live. Most of my life I have spent in the Federation (which is the favourite society in the majority of SF books) and will soon live in a system that aspires to some new type of Union which is led by Bankers and financial Barons. (Note from the author: the interviewee here speaks of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and after of the contemporary Croatian State).

In that sense, it doesn't change much for me – we vote for people who have found themselves in their places by respecting Groucho Marx's thought number 2: Those are my principles, and if you don't like

them.... well, I have others. Analysis and observation of their actions and interactions produces a range of amusing situations which I treat as a researcher in some kind of experimental laboratory for psycho-paranoid meta-delusions.

Do you seek to provoke?

Provocation is just a possibility that offers itself in the works that I do. It won't happen if the audience, or an art expert or somebody who keeps the heritage of capitalist brands, doesn't notice some of the facts which I show to the world. I would prefer that my works make people laugh. Not long ago in Ljubljana, I managed to do that with my work "Patria – Count On Us!"

Some suspect that we **are carried**
by the **wrong stream**,
because **we listen to records and we play rock**.
But somewhere in us
is the flame of battle
and I say to you what I know well:
Count on us.
Probably, that is why there are 30 000 people in the streets of Ljubljana today.

Everything will bury us if the work we use is forbidden fruit from the web, or if we are playing with the brands of big corporations. That will never pass. If, however, you want to prove yourself as an artist-provocateur whose work shows the irregularities around the usurpation of public areas, the irregularities in the accreditation of big banks, the suppression of workers' rights, that's ok. These goods are popular. With this, I don't think that they are not valid themes, but just that they are **permitted**.

How can you be relevant in the artistic scene?

The logic of the neo-liberal art scene in the world is clear – you are as relevant as your value at the end of the annual accounting and paying of tax. You can also be relevant if your work is taken care of by the media or the state. I am in a position equal to that of culture in my State. They put up with us.

Is performance art the future? Or are we already living in this future?

I would not dare to position performance as an art of the future. I am prone to more radical thoughts and so I see the future of art in the form of revolutionary judgements, in which the main judge will be Groucho Marx. My art future, however, I see in the prediction of the future that I have announced with my work *Cabbage Clairvoyant*. I believe that many artists will cut off their own legs and arms, that they will burn parliaments and courts, destroy banks and eat money, and how they will, in the end, turn into pure energy and swirl through space, transformed into spirals.

What were the funniest reactions, as understood by you, you had from people to your installations / performances?

In a situation where they are able to eat and drink for free, people somehow lose their compass a little, and enjoy the charms of spontaneous action. At the highly controlled happening *Unveiling the Plaque* in Oporovac in 2011, in front of the pig sty, I set out chairs facing the pigs. At the same time, roast pork was served. The audience duly sat in the chairs and watched the pigs while eating the pork. Above them flew the American flag, and soldiers in the uniforms of the United Nations danced a tribal dance and sought a prophet. Fires burned and smoke rose. A nice image. The twilight of civilisation.

Is there a clear cut message throughout your work? If yes, what would that be and how is it communicated?

The message is clear. Only love after the slaughter can save us. I'm surprised that the Beatles don't have a verse like that in one of their songs. And a massacre is coming. After the massacre, I predict serenity.

INTERVIEW WITH BOJANA RADULOVIC

BY KARLA HORVAT CRNOGAJ
TRANSFORMING OBJECTS INTO SUBJECTS



Bojana Radulović, a visual artist and audiovisual producer from Montenegro, has taken part in many group and solo exhibitions, among which is *Illegal Performance* at the festival (Exhibiting) Baroque Bodies, in the Flemish Cultural Center, Vlaams de Brakke Grond Cultuurhuis, in Amsterdam in 2012. Her video and film art has been shown at festivals in the Balkan region, and she is engaged as a producer in several media, including film magazines and TV.

The body is a frequent focus of your work. How did this exploration of corporeality find its trigger?

I was most intrigued by the attention that bodies – especially female bodies – drew to themselves, and where the borders of the ways they are used are, and of the ways that human bodies are brought to their physical existence.

What do you think defines the female body in public perception? How is this perception influenced by the particular geo-political context?

On the public perception of the female body, but also of everything else, influence is formed by the mass-media, as well as the system of values, the traditions, and the level of education.

In your work *Illegal Performance*, performed (Exhibiting) Baroque Bodies festival in Amsterdam, you address the topic of the position of Muslim women in modern European democracies. Why is their position specific and what are the consequences of that position?

Muslim women continue, it seems to me, to be sovereign only towards their role in the scope of family life, whereas towards the demands that the modern society imposes they are not ready, they do not know how, or they are forbidden, to answer. On the personal level the consequences can be different, though weakening of self-respect can be one of the most obvious, and on the social level it can lead to the lack of a dialogue of understanding and mutual recognition between the members of different cultural groups, to the ghettoization of minorities and similar.



Illegal Performance by Bojana Radulović
(photo contributed by artist)

Why did you call your work *Illegal Performance?* What is it that's illegal? What was the focal point?

I have put myself in the position of the Muslim woman – in that sense, it can be illegal to play with the political symbols. Playing with the EU flag in the very heart of Europe... it has something forbidden in it, something that the public and the dominant politics are aiming to forbid.

The motif you chose to problematize that subject is the visual representation of the Muslim woman – the burqa – or, in a broader sense; this work problematizes the female body as a polygon on which the political semantics are imprinted. In the description of the work you say that by aiming at the erogenous zones of the forbidden you draw attention to the usage of the female body. Can you define who has the power to imprint this meaning onto the female body and what is it that is forbidden?

"They" – the ones who inscribe the meanings – do not have the strength or the power, but they obviously have the force, and tradition, religion and laws can empower them to use it. Sexuality is power in a way that has been discussed by the psychoanalysts, and on the other side are the fear, violence, and restrictions.

How important is the body in the context of the clash of the civilisations of the East and the West, and how important is it in the context of the western way of the usage of the female body by the media culture of the West as an empty space that is adequate for the inscription of different meanings? Considering that one couldn't really call eastern cultures unpatriarchal, what is the difference between the eastern and the western modes of patriarchy in relation to the dominance that is being forced over the female body?

The patriarchy is not existent in the West in its pure form; these days we actually have the discussion on gay marriage in France, two days ago in Canada an out lesbian became the prime minister. Things have changed since the moment women began to approach the labor market in greater numbers.



Air Doll by Bojana Radulović
(photo by Bojan Majdevac)

What meaning do the sex toys bear, placed in a row like dynamite below the burqa sewn from the EU flag? Or in other words – what threat do the Muslim women present to the European democracies?

This dynamite actually speaks about the female suicide attackers in the near East. These are the women who have been told that if they explode the dynamite along with their bodies in a full bus, market or in front of an American military base, they will reserve a place for themselves and their families in heaven.

This work was later performed in Belgrade. Could you notice a difference in these two performances? How would you compare them?

These are two very different things which are very hard to compare, because I had a different approach and different support, and the performances were promoted in a very different way – the audiences reacted very well, in both cases.

In the work Air Doll performed at the Limit – Live art festival 2012 in Belgrade, in which you are coated in latex, reduced to your vaginal and anal opening surrounded by sterile space, you speak about the mis-usage of sexuality with the goal of reaching of a temporal release. What does the mis-usage of sexuality mean to you and in which way is it manifested in modern society? Whom does your critique address?

The message is not addressed to a specific enemy; the idea is about the message itself, about trying to understand these things.



Your body is static, fixed like an object. What is the role of the human being reduced to an object in this sexual communication? If you are the object in this interaction, who are the subjects?

The 'object' and the 'subject' aren't fixed. The object was a subject before it became an object and it can become it again. The pumps on the stage are left on the stage as a reminder to the audience to blow air into to the doll, to reanimate it, in a way, and to interact with it.

How would you connect, and how express the difference between these two works?

Both works deal with the body, sexuality, realisation of the body, and the borders of personal responsibility, with the mis-usage of the body, and personal responsibility. In the second performance I dealt more with the personal responsibility and the individual acts that lead towards isolation and helplessness or disorder.

During the research for these works, did you encounter your next potential field of performative exploration focused on (female) corporeality?

It doesn't have to be a female body, it can be male – the approach of society towards a mutilated body, a handicapped body, my own approach towards a handicapped or a mutilated body... recently, I am interested in people missing an arm or a leg...

Are you working on a new project right now?

Yes. Many things and ideas are coming to my mind, but I am working on a movie right now.



INTERVIEW WITH HAZIM BEGAGIĆ

BY DARKO LUKIĆ

BRINGING VITALITY BACK TO THEATRE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



Hazim Begagić has been the General Manager and Artistic Director of the Bosnian National Theatre in Zenica since 2010.

When you became manager of the Bosnian National Theatre in Zenica, it had been financially and artistically ruined. Less than two years later, you had had 25 openings, three regional co-productions, been to 38 festivals and received 32 awards. It is very impressive. Can you define your "formula" for such theatre revival?

In the unique, and in many ways specific and complex system of cultural policies in BiH today, which is completely conducive to anarchy in the absence of regulations, systematic solutions, or transparent procedures, it is really not easy to manage an organization that is part of the institutional cultural system. It is simple only if you agree that the organization survives at all

costs, and if you work by inertia. I think that this is disastrous for artistic organizations, and that such a thing just leads to entropy. In the last three seasons we regularly ended up with several premiers, of which two-thirds were produced by us, while insisting on at least three to four domestic and regional productions, from which we undoubtedly had huge benefits and successes, both in terms of the aesthetic and the production. This form of production in recent years has given us a lot of opportunities. We managed to get out of the local setting and make some significant and notable successes on the regional theatre scene. The image of the local theatres here in Bosnia, which was not always sufficiently distinctive or significant, has somewhat changed now, and the theatre is already perceived as a theatre with good performances, open to collaboration, partnership, and innovative projects and major programs. Behind this lies the important work of our employees and associates. On the other hand, it is true that this is a long-term, on-going process, and not an easy place to get to. The vitality that we have achieved needs to improve and develop, and in this setting of the public institutional culture it is not easy. It will not be easy to keep up the motivation that will allow us to change and improve the business environment, which is highly bureaucratic.

So in this situation of a highly bureaucratized public institution owned by the state, it was necessary to strengthen and train the administrative teams of young and educated personnel, and thus empowered, to go and reform the theatre's organization and implement the artistic plan. Over time, it all contributed to a general improvement in the image of our theatre, and of our performances and achievements at theatre festivals, as well as our omnipresence in the media, and wider professional community benevolence.

You were educated in Italy, Croatia and USA. How much of that knowledge about cultural management can you apply to the Bosnian situation?

Theoretical knowledge is always welcome and very useful, but is not quite enough on its own, and is not always fully applicable in practice – especially not in this circumstance, where we have an absence of systemic solutions, or even any sort of approximately stable funding model. When I was studying theatre and theatrical production, reading literature on the theoretical level, and studying various examples from theatre practice, I had a vision, which I now I was an idealistic vision of how the theatre should be operated along with other arts organizations. Today things are very different, and I think that it is probably similar in any other activity as well. Practice, and solving daily problems, brings another dimension of experience that can become knowledge, and this knowledge should again be converted

into quality theory and transferred to others, younger and newer creators of artistic productions. It is the responsibility of anyone who wishes to engage in serious academic work. As a university assistant, I get special pleasure and joy from the fact that after gaining daily practical experience in professional stage productions, my lessons have become noticeably better, more interesting and more open to students. The perspective brought by practical experience in the specific context of the surrounding environment is very important, especially when communicating with students. In addition, implementing a system of institutional reform won't be possible without the appropriate skills and competencies that are more specialized and targeted to specific areas. Certainly there will always be a chance to find good theatre managers among actors, directors and playwrights, but I think we can expect a lot from young professionals that are gaining their knowledge about management and entrepreneurship in the cultural sector, and their principles of contemporary productions through specialized programs of study.

The topic of your doctoral thesis is the transition process in performing arts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What are the basic differences in that situation compared to other transition states?

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the tradition of theatre has always relied on the significant theatrical tradition of the neighbouring countries, especially Serbia and Croatia. Primarily, this dependency manifests itself where human resources do not directly reflect the profile of the repertory and artistic production. In this respect, things have changed significantly since the eighties of the last century. Today's B and H theatre system is specific due to the social and cultural policy framework within which it operates. It's a question of a political experiment which, over the past fifteen years, has created an unstable and extremely loose community, and such a situation will inevitably impact on theatre and the arts scene. Small regional levels of government are fully constitutionally empowered to manage culture, although only some of them have only a minimum of manpower and other resources to be able to competently do so. In such a system, when there is also an absence of any coordination at higher levels, poor legislation is adopted, procedures, elections of directors and boards of directors are non-transparent and politically driven, and budget resources are allocated without clear criteria or standards. Ultimately, everything must inevitably be reflected in the art and repertory theatre policies, and insufficient development of the so-called independent scene, for which there are no incentives.



Hazim Begagić in theater
(photo contributed by the artist)

You insist very much on co-productions, regional cooperation and presence in the cultural space of the Balkans. What are the benefits of such cultural collaboration? Why do you find it so important?

As I already said, it is important for several reasons. While it is our obligation and duty to work for the community in which we operate, the theatre no longer makes any sense if it is bound by some local or regional boundary, although this unfortunately often suits many interests. I think the future, especially of those theatres which are not found in larger and more developed artistic communities, is in developing partnerships with other theatres with similar capacities, in countries and regions with similar profiles. Because of that, such partnership and co-production projects with theatres and colleagues from Zagreb, Virovitica, Tuzla, Sarajevo, Kragujevac, Belgrade, and Banja Luka can be realised.

Therefore, in just the last couple of projects we have cooperated with artists and authors from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro (Frlić O., A. Tomić, J. Kovačić, H. Pasović, F. Grinvald, D. Lukić, T. Šljivar, P. Pejaković, Spahić, S., D. Mustafić Zupačić M., E. Flisar, R. Smiljanić ...). The large number of calls to regional theatre festivals, and a growing number of media names, professional

critics, and awards confirm that this is the right strategy. With this we are expanding our network of friends and colleagues, and opening our repertoire and overall program to all who are interested and who wish to bring something to invest, like creativity or production capacity. The benefits are truly indescribable.

How do you see the prospects of performing arts in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the aesthetic, production and cultural levels?

I think that without a substantial and radical reform the future is neither good nor bright. I'm even inclined to claim that the future of any model is questionable, because things are so ripe for substantial changes. However, I am glad that today, unlike some earlier times, we have, at least, more and more awareness and consensus about the necessity of reforming the artistic and theatrical systems in the country, primarily referring to the network of public theatres. Public theatre then, although still in the dominant position in the theatre funding system, did not change significantly, not in the beginning, nor during, nor in the final stages of the transition. On the other hand, many repertory theatres in this transitional period have lost their vitality, including the audience, and the present democratic processes that have brought changes in all other social activities have only partially affected the system, and public theatre with it. New trends in culture repertory theatre can hardly respond because of their immobility and inflexibility, they cannot use the principles of contemporary theatre organization and management, they do not develop private-public partnerships, and they are not included in co-productions or international co-operation, all of which require more flexible models of organization. Opportunities for partnerships and joint implementation theatre projects have almost never been explored. Unfortunately, there is no formal and possibly binding form of coordination in the formation of public policy that would provide basic guidelines regulating the theatre system. In addition, the board of professional theatres is not active, nor are public theatres associated in any other way, despite the fact that until 1992 there was a strong tradition of joint action of BH theatres, thanks to the republic's former, rigid community of professional theatres in B&H. Existing institutional frameworks of culture and politics systems do not allow the existence of a professional organization or a union of dramatic artists and theatre, or drama professionals at higher levels. Therefore, we can only talk about the prospects of B&H theatres and their revival and development almost exclusively in the context of broader social changes that will, in this complex community, inevitably have to happen soon.

For seven years you have also been teaching at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Tuzla, and in Cultural Studies in Zenica. How do you see the new generations of young artists in Bosnia and Herzegovina? How open they are for new concepts and trends in performing arts and cultural development?

In my opinion, during the past few years we have had a few interesting young artists who have interesting and regionally noticeable poetics, such as the director Selma Spahić, with whom the Bosnian National Theatre has collaborated during the past season, and still does. Selma is a young director who was an art director last season. We started this season with her play *Scratching*. The play has already had significant success, and she is yet to participate in any festivals. Unfortunately one name is not enough – especially not compared to the number of drama academies and artistic study programs. The situation is much better for actors, as there are five drama academies and artistic schools with study programs for acting. Because of that, today on the artist's market we have a large number of highly educated, young, creative and talented academy actors. However, an absence of entrepreneurship, non-encouraging policies towards the independent art scene, and each artist's elementary wish to find their place – almost always in the artistic company of a public theatre – has led to the point where we still cannot confirm the presence of the critical mass of young professionals who will significantly change relations in domestic theatre. We also have a disproportionate number in already-developed theatre centres, which are much closer to bigger public foundations in Sarajevo and Banja Luka, in comparison to the economically and artistically less-developed regions. In other theatre professions the situation is much worse. Although theatres do not employ many directors and playwrights, the worst relationship is towards theatre producers, whose function, role, and meaning do not exist, and have not even minimal public awareness, despite the fact that there are three study programs for the profession in the country. Speaking of open-mindedness towards contemporary trends, we can only observe these trends and concepts by attending European and global theatre festivals. Or we can limit ourselves to festivals like MESS of Bitef, and few festivals in Croatia and Slovenia. Unfortunately, there are few of those who are seriously, systematically, and with dedication engaged in theatre. Part of the reason for

that is the loss of the role and the importance that the theatre used to have, which is reflected in the overall production possibilities and the eventual aesthetics. In these circumstances young directors, playwrights and even actors are turning to other mediums, and frequently even to commercial activities like engageing in the advertising and marketing industry, PR and so on.

What are the basic opportunities and threats in performing arts in Bosna and Herzegovina today?

Today, performance art in Bosnia and Herzegovina is almost always produced within public theatres that are not sufficiently open to change, innovation, new aesthetics or authors' poetics. This model of organisation is outdated, slow, inflexible and totally maladjusted towards new conditions or circumstances. However, that system, no matter how bad it is, succeeds to withstand the changes, and prevails mostly by inertia.

ART HEART THEORY, THE- ORY HEART ART

BY UNA BAUER

**A SHORT HISTORY OF THREE PERFORMING ARTS MAGAZINES
FROM LJUBLJANA, ZAGREB AND BELGRADE:**

MASKA, FRAKCIJA AND TKH (WALKING THEORY)

The cultural axis of the former Yugoslavia was built through comparison and tension, through envy and mutual respect of the cultural scenes of Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. In the 1990s, for obvious reasons, this link seemed broken for good. And yet, as in *The Adventures of Asterix*, where a village of indomitable Gauls resisted Roman occupation, three performing arts magazines **Maska, Frakcija** and **TkH (Walking Theory)** from three cities resisted cultural blockage between three countries and continued to develop various projects together, to work on conceptual and physical exchanges, despite the official hostility of their states.

Of course it wasn't quite like that. Every attempt at historical reconstruction fights with necessary obstacles in the shape of a tendency to mythologize. But it also isn't very far from the truth.

Maska is the performing arts magazine with the longest (although initially intermittent) history. It was first launched in 1920 (10 issues were published), and revived in 1985 by the Union of Cultural Organizations. Maja Breznik and Irena Štaudohar, as editors in the early 1990s, brought a major shift in editorial policy, opening the magazine towards an interdisciplinary¹ approach interested in experimental practices, arts and technology, away from the scholarly framing focused mostly on drama performances. The early 1990s also brought an attempt by Dušan Jovanović, Dragan Klaić and Peter Božić (the latter was *Maska*'s editor, together with Tone Peršak) at making a transnational version of the magazine, *Euromaske* (European Theatre Quarterly). However, only three issues were published, even though it was a rather glossy and reader friendly magazine. As Emil Hrvatin noted in his text, written on the occasion of the publication of 100th issue of *Maska*, "If there is no mission, the mission becomes possible." This needs to be placed in the context of the destiny of other performing arts magazines that aimed for international readership, which have also ceased to exist.² National borders and identities sometimes seem no less important than they did during the 19th century, regardless of the globalization processes. Since 1993, *Maska* is published by the *Maska* Institute, and until 2006 its editor-in-chief was Janez Janša, formerly known as Emil Hrvatin. In 2007, Katja Praznik took over, and since 2011, Maja Murnik.

¹ Interdisciplinarity was also the key word in the founding of *TkH* magazine. According to their manifesto "interdisciplinarity is not the field of a relaxed, easy security: it starts with a destruction of solidarity of old disciplines (solidarity meaning that each discipline keeps its part of the field) in the interest of the research into Text, or rather, the situation of theoretical performance)". "Teorija koja hoda: manifest" *TkH*, first issue, Belgrade, April 2001. Download various issues of *TkH* journal here <http://www.tkh-generator.net/en/journal>.

² See Emil Hrvatin, 'If There is No Mission, Mission Becomes Possible' http://nova.maska.si/en/us/history/197/emil_hrvatin.html

Meanwhile, in Zagreb, the Open Society Institute (initially Soros foundation, as it was funded by George Soros, a businessman “who broke the bank of England” and liberal philanthropist) funded and initiated a number of projects, not only in Croatia, but also in other post-communist countries. These projects later spun off into independent NGOs, and Soros’ mission was to help the development and strengthening of the civil sector in a country where it hardly existed. Unlike Slovenia, which went through the period of transition from communism to capitalism relatively painlessly (especially in terms of escaping the civil war), Croatia was not left unscarred. The 1990s were a dramatic step back in terms of cultural richness, contemporariness and diversity. The values that Franjo Tuđman and his HDZ party promoted were those of Croatian nationalism, Catholicism, the importance of ancient history and the “origins” of the Croatian people, together with traditional, unproblematic forms of art, such as naïve painting. **Frakcija** was one of the first projects of the Centre for Dramatic Art, published in collaboration with the Academy for the Dramatic Arts. The intense tone of the “manifesto” of the Centre for Dramatic Art, written in the mid-1990s, speaks a lot about the situation in the theatre in Croatia at the time.

The CDU has grown out of the necessity to break through the monotony and artificial tempo of the Croatian performing arts scene. The established theatre repertory politics is based mostly on ensemble productions, total lack of international guest performances aside from festivals, and the inability to differentiate between educational, informational and development programs. This inevitably resulted in centralization of theatre scene, in which the hierarchy of importance of individual events is formed on contextual or budgetary support from theatrical institutions or financing parties.³

The CDU was interested in the articulation of strategic thinking about performing arts and representation in general (thus the suspiciousness about “festivals” as a highly representative format that lasts for a limited time, and then the circus leaves the town, with a questionable impact on the community).

The CDU strives to open up new possibilities for the breakthrough of serious performative thought and action into those areas that do not expect their surfacing. Under “serious” we mean the indispensable nature of individual performances, projects, concepts and opinions, and by “surfacing” a protuberance into the static staging of the Croatian art scene.⁴

It is important to note that neither Maska, nor Frakcija, nor TkH wanted to manifestly “place themselves in alternative and avant-guard currents”⁵, although they are clearly a part of that tradition of thinking and making work. Instead, Frakcija, for instance, insists on the notion of “seriousness” because it wants to position the art it is writing about (or rather writing with) as a measure of things, rather than agreeing to measure itself by the dominant, narrative, dramatic, theory terrified theatre practices. All three magazines undertook a change of perspective in which they refuse to treat the art they are interested in as off-, or off off- but as something that is important by itself, not as a difference in relation to something else, an alternative to something which assumes the central position.

After the first issue, Goran Sergej Pristaš replaced Vjeran Zuppa as the editor-in-chief and remained one until 2006, when Marin Blažević took over for 2 years, followed by Ivana Ivković (2007-2012) and, recently, Marko Kostanić. In its beginnings, Frakcija was firstly trying to “construct” the virtually non-existent independent performing arts scene. The journal even brought the word “performance” and “performing arts” into use in Croatia. Similarly to Maska, after the early 1990s, when its editors decided to go for a retro-futuristic design, Frakcija showed a lot of interest and respect for the importance of design and visual culture.⁶ This was also a result of the interdisciplinary approach of both magazines, which makes perfect sense in such an interdisciplinary “discipline”, or rather, the field of performing arts. Scholarly theatre magazines are usually full of endless sheets densely packed with text. But as both Maska and Frakcija fought for theatre that would not be primarily play-based or narrative-based, simultaneously, they also fought for a magazine that would think differently about the relationship

3 See <http://www.cdu.hr/frakcija/index.htm>

4 Ibid.

5 “Teorija koja hoda: manifest” TkH, first issue, Belgrade, April 2001.

6 The issue of design of these three magazines would require a new article, but I will just mention here that the design of Frakcija (Igor Masnjak 1-18 issue, Cavarpayyer 19-23, Laboratorium 24-56, Ruta 52-today) received numerous awards, including European Regional Design Annual Certificate of Design Excellence 1998, Annual Design Review Certificate of Excellence 2003, YoungGuns International Advertising & Design Award 2002, Icograda Excellence Award 2003, iF communication design award 2005. To be recognized so many times for design as a performing arts magazine, does indicate that Frakcija succeeded in communicating across the fields. In terms of design, it is important also to mention the 20/21 issue, 22/23 issue (both thematizing typology – typographical ideology) and, especially, the 19 issue of Frakcija, designed by Cavarpayyer, which was extremely audacious in its attempt to integrate the look and the text of the magazine. So much so, that it made the journal a challenge to read - a challenge that, if accepted, produces surprisingly satisfying results.

between the image and text. They even treated typography as illustration and conceptual choice, because it was never about a battle between the picture and the word, but about “a specific way of thinking.” The main difference between Maska, Frakcija and TkH, and other performing arts magazines in the region, is that they were led by the idea that a performing arts magazine is not simply a document of what is happening in a particular performing art field of a particular country, but also the space where art and theory are happening together *on the page*. The magazine that tried the hardest to *perform on the page* was probably TkH, at least in its beginnings.⁷

It is also important to emphasize that all three magazines were always a part of a larger initiative in the field of performing arts in their countries, that also included educational and production activities. Maska, for instance, is also the production unit which produced and co-produced some of the most important Slovenian (and not only Slovenian) performances, but also other types of events, such as exhibitions. Maska runs a continuous educational programme as well: the Seminar of Contemporary Performing Arts, with relevant guest speakers from all over the world.⁸ The CDU also regularly organizes discussions, conferences, seminars and the like.⁹ The journal **TkH**, founded in 2000 in Belgrade, was only one of the outputs of a joint project TkH¹⁰, initiated by students of three faculties, the Faculty of Music (Bojana Cvejić, Ksenija Stevanović, Jasna Veličković, Jelena Novak), the Faculty of Dramatic Arts (Ana Vujanović, Bojan Đorđev) and the Faculty of Fine Arts (Siniša Ilić), together with a professor at the Faculty of Music (Miško Šuvaković). They started their Walking Theory group at CENPI (Centar za novo pozorište i igru / Centre for new theatre and acting) with a theoretical performance, a performance which was at the same time aiming to establish certain “axioms” of their operation as a group. From their first issue, one can conclude that those axioms were (some of them still are): the destruction of the perfection of text, the destruction of the totality of the composition, the destruction of a clear directedness of the message, theory before art (and not after art), writing where subject disappears, the loss of identity through writing, the language that speaks for itself, multiplicity of writing, art as that which represents representation, nature that represents art, mimesis of mimesis, theory as that which has a body, accidentality, the unimportance of content, empty footnotes, transparent skin of the new theatre, theatre that will not leave you alone, fragmentary discourse, importance of context and framing.

As for the themes of the issues, we can see strong correspondences. These were Frakcija’s themes in its beginnings: performatives, body and technology, theatre of memory, iconoclastic theatre, modern primitivism, Russian actionism, sexuality, body/difference, utopia/dystopia, Eastern Europe, institutions, cultural policy, festivals, Artaud, Brecht, Barba, Eurokaz. They could equally be (and were) Maska’s themes.

After an attempt to consolidate the independent scene, and after the 16th issue, which was a survey of the new Croatian theatre and dance scene, Frakcija decided to dedicate itself to a broader context, although it did present the work of young Croatian playwrights in the issue 57/58. The possibility of existing in the broader context was also enabled by the fact that the journal - in fact, all three journals - were published bilingually, the second language being English.

From the 20th issue onwards, Frakcija’s focal themes were: actor and/as author, radicalisms of Eastern Europe, spontaneity, eventuality, improvisation, vague, volatile, incomprehensible, group dynamics, public space, rhetorics, labour, institutions, education, surveillance & security, sound, curation in the performing arts, art & capital, image & spectating, affects & emotions.

Perhaps the slight difference in focus in relation to the themes of Maska’s issues is that Maska always had a very strong take on technology and art, which was reflecting the interests and preoccupations of Slovenian performing arts, such as Dragan Živadinov’s space projects or Igor Štrromajer’s Ballettikka Internettikka. Apart from biotechnology and technology, science and genetic art, Maska was also interested in theatrical tactics, dance and politics, vision and visuality, violence, space, women, eroticism, body, genetic art, postdramatic theatre, new European dramaturgy, performance education, politics of

⁷ See Ana Vujanović *performing* in her article “Autobiography”, written for the first issue of TkH magazine: “ANA VUJANOVIC IS A VERY SPECIAL THE PILGRIM PERSON too tall, of medium height, small and a bit too tall for a woman, neither especially beautiful nor particularly ugly – she is really beautiful! Her face is asymmetrical: looks like Winona Ryder from the left, and Susan Sarandon from the right profile. **what have i done** her gaze is distinct – neither decisive THE STROLLER nor scared, neither thoughtful, somehow undefined **and i am not** and her eyes are yellow, green, brown, black and yellowish brown with green dots and lines (...) she reads a lot, but reading is troublesome, so she mostly doesn’t read, and it is also not good for you to read too much, because within a blink – life is over. **THE VAGABOND**. thus she is very talented for writing and it comes naturally to her – it is surprising that she never writes, probably because she isn’t talented”

⁸ See more about Maska’s activities on their website www.maskas.si.

⁹ See more about CDU’s activities on their website www.cdu.hr.

¹⁰ See more about TkH’s activities on their website www.tk-h-generator.net.

representation, open work, artivism, capitalism and artistic practice, archive, surveillance, affects & art, contemporary art and new social paradigms, dance and theory.

As TkH is published twice a year, and it also started later than Maska and Frakcija, it is currently on its 20th issue. The themes are, nevertheless, compatible: new theories of dramaturgy, theories of dance, performing performance in performing arts, digital performance, queer performance, self-organisation, self-education, right to theory, the politicality of performance, art and the public good. Although all three magazines have a strong theoretical take, TkH is perhaps the one which is most focused on theory, and inspired by it. However, as many of Maska's authors were writing for Frakcija, TkH's authors writing and editing Maska, Frakcija's authors writing for Maska and TkH and vice versa, the similarities are more visible than the differences. What is characteristic of all three magazines is definitely a very serious critical approach, which thoroughly problematizes all "dogmas" of contemporary performing arts almost as soon as they establish themselves. Such was, for instance, Maska's issue on open work¹¹, edited by Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović (originally from TkH) which argues that

...the critical point of departure [of this issue] is first to examine the overdetermined and overrated use of attributes of openness, flexibility, mobility; research, laboratory, and process-orientation as modes of production; perception/reception/spectatorship, community, networking and self-organization as frames of distributing work.¹²

This partly makes it difficult to articulate the fixed values of these three magazines, as they are always in the process of "problematizing, possibilizing, transforming" and re-defining themselves. However, they are even critical of this redefinition, as 'the poetics of neo- avant garde reconfigured to the politics of production in today's neoliberal economy'.

As Bojana Cvejić says:

The evidence to this shift is contained in the fact that openness is relegated to interpretation, considered as an immanent condition of any work of art today. One can cynically recognize pragmatic relativism in the logic of representing art in today's democracy: multiple interests – multiple viewpoints. But one also knows better...¹³

¹¹Maska: Open Work, 5/6.94/95 (autumn – winter 2005)

¹²Bojana Cvejić, 'Editorial', Maska: Open Work, 5/6.94/95 (autumn – winter 2005), p.1

¹³Ibid.

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